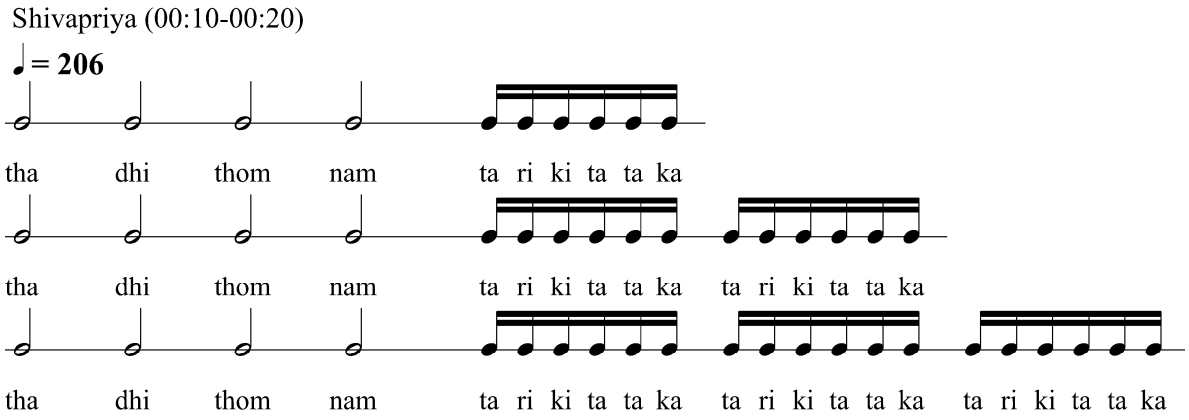
GLOBAL CASE STUDY 8: Konnakol Duet
Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iurhjlBum0o

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: India
SOURCE: Music Performance (YouTube Video)
SUMMARY: Konnakol is a branch of South Indian Carnatic music that uses syllables and phonemes as the building blocks of vocal percussion performances. While many Western music education methodologies similarly attribute syllables to beats and rhythmic divisions and subdivisions, konnakol's performative and improvisatory dimension has no parallel in the West. Konnakol performers cycle through the syllables *tha*, *dhi*, *thom*, and *nam* for the most important rhythms, e.g. those falling on heads of beats or at the beginning of patterns; and *ta*, *ki*, *ka*, *mi*, *ku*, *ri*, and others for inner and faster rhythms.
TASK: Watch the duet konnakol performance of V Shivapriya and B R Somashekar. Notice that while the performers' hands retain a metronome-like precision and stability in keeping the beat, konnakol's vocal percussion can get mind-bendingly complex. Often, performers begin with somewhat simple patterns that they subject to a mathematical process to take them to increasingly levels of complexity. Observe the pattern in Shivapriya's first gestures below.



ESSAY QUESTION
Shivapriya and Somashekar's performance is dazzling, oscillating between competing solos and unison pairings. Listen to it carefully and construct a musical narrative. Is music getting simpler or more complex over time? Are the two performers friends or rivals? Does their relationship change over time? What is this performance's climax? What other ideas, images or stories does this performance evoke in your mind, and why? (200-250 words)